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IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1960

No. .....

THE SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY,

Petitioner,

v.

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,

Respondent.

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

The Superior Oil Company (Superior), Intervener in the proceeding below, prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit entered in the below mentioned proceedings on February 22, 1961.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, entered February 22, 1961, is not yet reported. Said opinion and the Court's Judgment entered the same day are reprinted herein as Appendix A (infra, pp. 1a-2a and pp. 34a).

The Order of the Federal Power Commission (Commission) issued August 10, 1959 is reported at 22 FPC 369 (App. 33[1] and infra, pp. 36a-42a), and the Order Denying Rehearing, issued October 10, 1959, is reported at 22 FPC 655 (App. 364, and infra, pp. 43a-45a). These Orders were reversed by the Court below. They are reprinted herein for convenience as Appendix B (infra, pp. 36a-45a).

JURISDICTION

The Opinion and Judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit were entered February 22, 1961 (infra, 1a-2a, 34a). Petition For Rehearing was denied April 25, 1961 (infra, p. 35a). The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 USC 1254 (1) and Section 19(b) of the Natural Gas Act, 52 Stat. 831 (1938); 15 USC Sec. 717r(b).

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Does this Court's decision in *Atlantic Refining Company v. Public Service Commission of the State of New York*, 360 U.S. 378 (CATCO), prohibit the Federal Power Commission from finding that a proposed gas sale under the Natural Gas Act is in the public interest if the record before the Commission does not include cost-of-service evidence to establish that the initial price is just and reasonable?

2. Does CATCO prohibit said Commission from permanently certificating a sale of natural gas subject to the Natural Gas Act unless the initial price is collected under an agreement to refund any part of said initial price not ultimately found to be just and reasonable after a rate hearing?

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[1] References are to the Transcript page as shown in the Joint Appendix.

3. Does a reviewing court exceed its power of review under the Natural Gas Act when it finds that the Commission did not give "most careful scrutiny" or respond with "most responsible reaction" to an initial price (as required by this Court's CATCO decision) when the entire order of the Commission, except for an outline of the project involved, is devoted to a showing that the proposed price is required by the public convenience and necessity and such finding is sustained by substantial record evidence?

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The decision of the Court below conflicts with this Honorable Court's decision in the *Atlantic Refining Company* v. *Public Service Commission of the State of New York*, 360 U.S. 378, (called hereinafter "CATCO"), and further conflicts with recent decision of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals[2] notwithstanding that it relies on both cases as authority for its conclusions. It held, contrary to CATCO and said Ninth Circuit case, that the determination of a just and reasonable price is a prerequisite to certification of a producer's sale of gas without price condition. It held, also contrary to the Ninth Circuit Court decision, that the "price line" referred to in CATCO is a pre-CATCO line.

The Court below vacated an order of the Federal Power Commission (called hereinafter "Commission") which granted a certificate of public convenience and necessity to Petitioner (infra, pp. 36a-42a) authorizing the sale of gas to Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation (called hereinafter "Transco") under the terms of the Natural Gas Act[3]. Said sale is of gas produced 22 miles offshore South Louisiana with a total price of 21.4c per MCF. The major-

[2] *The United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *Federal Power Com.* (9 Cir. 1960), 283 F. 2d 817, cert. den. April 17, 1961.

[3] 15 U.S.C. 717-717w.

ity opinion disposing of this matter encompasses only three paragraphs (infra, pp. 1a-2a). It relies in part on the reasoning in another decision by the Court rendered the same day (infra, pp. 22a-33a). It is here significant to state that said other case was heard at a different time, before a different examiner, involved gas produced from a different field, to be sold under a different contract, to a different purchaser, and the evidence submitted was by different witnesses testifying as to different matters. Furthermore, and perhaps the most significant difference is the fact that the proposed *initial price in this case is 2.4¢* per MCF LESS than that proposed in the other case when tax reimbursement is considered. In said other case, which involved Sun Oil Company (hereinafter called "Sun") the Court stated the issue to be whether the Commission had, in accordance with the admonition of this Court in CATCO, carefully scrutinized and responsibly reacted to the proposed initial price. Deciding that it had not, the Court, without finding what the price line was, concluded as follows:

> ". . . no doubt . . . in this case the price of 23½¢ (sic[4]) per MCF, including the tax reimbursement, was out of line as the term was used by the Supreme Court, . ." (infra, p. 32a)

and therefore held that the Commission had abused its discretion in issuing, without price condition, the certificate sought by Sun. The Court concluded in the instant case that

> ". . . for the reasons set out in that case (the Sun case) the Commission erred in issuing an unconditional permanent certificate to . . . (Superior) . . . with an initial price of 21.4¢ per MCF. . . ." (infra, p. 1a)

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[4] Typographical error inasmuch as the further footnote in the same sentence shows the price to have been 21½¢ plus 2.3¢ tax reimbursement for a total price of 23.8¢ per MCF.

This record shows without contradiction that at the time of hearing prices of 22.35¢ per MCF (United Fuel) and 21.75¢ per MCF (American Louisiana) were being paid in the same area under certificates issued by the Federal Power Commission as early as 1953 and 1955[5]. This record further shows that under more recently issued certificates, which are now beyond contest, prices of 23.675¢ per MCF (Southern Natural) and 24.05¢ per MCF (Trunkline) are being paid in the same area[6]. These existing certificates and sales thereunder involve substantial quantities of gas moving into interstate commerce[7].

In considering the issues presented to it the Commission recognized the standards set forth in this Court's CATCO decision as follows:

> ". . . price is an element of prime importance which the Commission should scrutinize closely with a view

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[5] (App. 75-76) and see *Gulf Interstate Gas Co. (United Fuel Gas Co.,)* 12 F.P.C. 116, May 30, 1953, price 22.35¢ per MCF for 375 million cubic feet per day. *American Louisiana Pipe Line Company*, 13 F.P.C. 380, May 9, 1955, price 21.75¢ per MCF for 300 million cubic feet per day. This was contested without success. *Memphis Light, Gas & Water Division* v. *F.P.C.*, (CADC 1957), 243 F. 2d 628.

[6] (App. 70, 74) and see *Southern Natural Gas Co.*, 19 F.P.C. 558, price 23.675¢ per MCF for 298 million cubic feet per day; and *Trunkline Gas Co.*, 21 F.P.C. 704, price 24.05¢ per MCF for 135 million cubic feet per day. This was contested without success, *Public Service Commission* v. *F. P. C.*, (CADC 1960), 284 F. 2d 200. See also statement of General Policy No. 61-1, as amended, 25 *Federal Register*, 13969, 13970, fixing an area price for South Louisiana of 21.5¢ per MCF plus tax reimbursement.

[7] See Footnotes 5 and 6 supra, and note this computes to more than 400 billion cubic feet per year. According to a Federal Powder Commission report, all interstate natural gas pipe line companies combined purchased directly from gas producers only 7,519,992,780 MCF during the year 1959, so these 400 billion cubic feet would represent over 5% of total 1959 pipeline purchases.

to protecting the consumer. The Court further indicated what evidence might or should appropriately be adduced to support the proposed price, and what circumstances justified the attachment of an initial price condition. Such evidence includes evidence of whether the proposed price is 'out of line'; whether it would result in triggering of general price rises or an increase in the applicant's existing rates by reason of 'favored nation' clauses or otherwise; evidence of comparisons with the existing cost of gas to the purchaser; evidence of whether the proposed producer price would lead to an increase in the rates of the purchaser; evidence of a public need for the gas; and evidence respecting the other matters discussed by the Court in its opinion." (Infra, pp. 37a-38a)

And

"Turning to the facts of this record, we conclude that the requirement(s) laid down by the Supreme Court in its CATCO opinion have been met in this case." (Infra, p. 38a).

The basis for vacation of said Commission order by the Court below was as follows:

(A) The Commission did not carefully scrutinize and responsibly react to the initial price proposal.

(B) The Commission did not find that the price it deemed required by the public convenience was one that might ultimately be found just and reasonable.

(C) CATCO forbids certification of any price without provision for refund of any excess sum. (Infra, p. 2a).

REASONS FOR GRANTING WRIT

The conflicts between the decision below and the holding of this Court in CATCO and that of the Ninth Circuit Court in *The United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *Federal Power Commission*, 283 F. 2d 817, should not be allowed to stand

under any circumstance; however, here where such conflicts involve a matter so important to the jurisprudence and economy of the country as the requirements in the determination of public convenience and necessity under the Natural Gas Act, supra, the removal of conflicts is imperative.

Judge Brown's dissent to the opinion of the Court below succinctly sets forth the confusion of thought underlying the majority opinion below from which the conflicts were created. He said:

> "... Discussing these standards, there is interlaced in every conclusion a confusion of the 'just and reasonable' test for rates under Sections 4 and 5 with the requirement for certificating a new service that 'is or will be required by the present or future public convenience and necessity ...' Sec. 7(c)." (Infra, p. 5a).

Judge Brown's statement is occasioned by the following language in the majority opinion disposing of this case, i.e.:

> "... As we have pointed out in the companion case No. 18112, the record makes it clear that the finding of public necessity and convenience here is based too strongly on the fact that arm's length dealing and the effect of supply and demand required Transco to agree to the disputed price, rather than that the price had any relation to what might ultimately be found to be a just and reasonable price." (Infra, p. 2a).

Said statement clearly assumes that a preliminary determination, at least, of just and reasonable initial price is essential in a certificate proceeding under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act. CATCO is to the contrary:

> "It is true that the Act does NOT require a determination of just and reasonable rates in a Section 7 proceeding as it does in one under either Section 4

> or Section 5. Nor do we hold that a 'just and reasonable' rate hearing is a prerequisite to the issuance of producer certificates." 360 U.S. 378, 390-391. (Emphasis added)

See also *Memphis Light, Gas & Water Div.* v. *Federal Power Com.*, (CADC 1957), 243 F. 2d 628, 630, and *Florida Economic Advisory Council* v. *Federal Power Com.*, (CADC 1957), 251 F. 2d 643, cert. den. 356 U.S. 959, 78 S. Ct. 996; *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *Federal Power Com.*, (9 Cir. 1960) 283 F. 2d 817.

A holding that in a producer's certificate case the Commission must determine the relation between the price proposed and the just and reasonable price that might ultimately be fixed for that producer on a cost-of-service basis not only is clearly in conflict with this Court's CATCO decision, but it ignores the Congressionally designed framework of the Act itself as set forth in rate-fixing Sections 4 and 5 on the one hand, and certificate Section 7 on the other (infra, pp. 46a-47a). The standard for a new service is not "just and reasonable" as required under Sections 4 and 5, but the requirement of "present or future public convenience and necessity" under Section 7. In the one case the Commission is not concerned with commitment of a new gas supply to interstate sale; in the other the inducement for such a commitment must necessarily be considered. As said in CATCO, there is ". . . nothing illegal in the rejection of the alternative price proposed by the Commission and their standing firm on their own."[8] Therefore, a producer's refusal to accept a Commission-fixed lower initial rate is perfectly proper. It is not for the courts to say that Congress ought to have made all of the elements of the three sections identical in the light of their different purposes.

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[8] 360 U.S. 378, 388.

The holding below, if permitted to stand, would require the Commission to delay all certifications until it could determine at least preliminarily a just and reasonable rate for the petitioner. Comments in CATCO on the "nigh interminable" delay incident to rate determinations need not be expanded, but Judge Brown's comment is appropriate:

> "The target for criticism of delay and lumbering inefficiency as recent quasi-public reports reflect, is generally the administrative agency. But judges hearkening unto advocates protecting the absence of record 'proof' must bear some of the responsibility." (Infra, p. 5a F.N. 2)

II.

The Court below said in the third paragraph of the opinion that the certificating of a price which might be collected for several years without possibility of refund of any excess sums does not comport with the teaching of this Court in CATCO (infra, p. 2a). It seems almost inconceivable that the Court below is of the opinion that *every* initial price must be conditioned with a requirement that the seller agree to refund any part thereof which is not ultimately found just and reasonable, yet this is what the Court said. No argument should be required to show the complete confusion and chaos that would result from such a rule. No producer would ever know what part of an initial price would be retained or unreservedly available for use in current operations. No financing could be arranged based upon current income for the whole of same might have to be refunded, presumably with 7% interest. Assuming producers were willing, or, by virtue of financial necessity or their lease provisions were required, to accept such a price condition, and bearing in mind the "nigh interminable"

able" delay in concluding a rate case, it is apparent that finances for further development would not be available. Certainly no part of such funds could be used in search of new reserves. The producer would not only have to maintain a current ability to refund the whole of the sums collected, but also the addition of interest thereon, which would require the maintenance of a cash position even in excess of current receipts under the conditioned price. To point out the excessive and wasteful cost of operations under such circumstances is merely to elaborate the obvious. The Federal Power Commission, of course, knows that such a circumstance would be totally contrary to the public convenience and necessity and therefore such a condition would not meet the statutory standard of reasonableness.

Even if the above mentioned statement is to be considered in the background of the *Sun* decision, and interpreted to require conditioning of only prices in excess of "the line", the Court below apparently is of the opinion that "the line" is the rate at which parties were contracting in 1954 (infra, 32a) and a showing of "reason why" is required of the proponents of any higher rate. Furthermore the Court apparently deems "reason why" to be the same as cost-of-service evidence. This repeats the error stated above in that just and reasonable rate fixing is not a prerequisite to certification and creates separate error in holding that the 'line' of prices referred to in CATCO is a pre-CATCO price line. The Court in the *Sun* case (infra, p. 31a) pointed out that it agreed "with much" that was said by the Ninth Circuit in *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *Federal Power Commission*, *supra*; yet, the Ninth Circuit Court held directly to the contrary in regard to the establishment of a price line. It said at Page 823:

". . . we find without merit the contention that the price line must necessarily accord with the pre-CATCO line."

and

". . . the 'line' referred to in CATCO may properly be referenced to relevant existing producer prices under which substantial amounts of natural gas move in interstate commerce."

III.

Without reference to any fact shown in this record, the Court states that said record does not disclose that the Commission gave careful scrutiny to and responded with most responsible reaction to the initial price proposals as required in CATCO (infra, p. 2a). The Court ignores the fact that the Commission opinion is devoted almost entirely, except for a statement of the facts concerning the basic project, to the issue of the initial price proposals and a comparison of said price with previously certificated prices (infra, p. 36a-42a). There is a clear recognition that said price must be related to the requirements of public convenience and necessity in the background of this Court's opinion in CATCO. To say that the Federal Power Commission failed to most carefully scrutinize the price is to ignore the express wording of the Commission's decision as follows:

"Turning to the facts of this record, we conclude that the requirement(s) laid down by the Supreme Court in its CATCO opinion have been met in this case." (Infra, p. 38a).

* * *

"Considering whether the price is 'out of line' under CATCO, the facts support the conclusion that Superior's proposed price is not out of line on a com-

parative basis . . . the proposed price is less than other pipe lines such as Trunkline Gas Company in an offshore purchase, and United Fuel Company and Southern Natural Gas Company in Southern Louisiana, are paying." (Infra, p. 39a — see supporting evidence App. 70, 75-76, 74.)

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" . . . this price will not trigger any favored-nation clause . . . this price will not result in other pipe lines paying higher prices for gas . . ." (infra, 39a — see supporting evidence App. 50 and 75):

" . . . In our judgment the effects of such increase in Transco's rates as may result from the authorization of the sale proposed herein is outweighed by the benefits of these sales. (Infra, pp. 39a-40a.)

"Among those benefits is the gas supply which would be added to Transco's system . . . probably the largest single reserve ever contracted by Transco since it commenced operations." (Infra, p. 40a — see supporting evidence App. 51.)

• • •

"The public convenience and necessity obviously will be served by making this gas available to help supply the allocations of natural gas which the Commission has already authorized Transco to serve." (Infra, pp. 40a-41a.)

• • •

"Transco's witness testified that whenever it was possible for his company to augment its general gas supply . . . where it was already certificated and on terms substantially identical with . . . previous certifications, it was to the benefit of the company to do so. Our knowledge of Transco's system . . . convinces us that this is so."[3] (Infra, p. 41a — see supporting evidence App. 50 and 52.) (F.N. 3) "This opinion may be shared by others most directly affected . . . UGI is the only customer company which excepted to the examiner's decision" — granting unconditioned certificates.

And on rehearing the Commission said:

> ". . . We did consider the element of price in relation to the public demand and need for this gas and the maintenance of adequate service, as our order on its face discloses, and find that although we cannot determine the 'just and reasonable' rate for this sale under the rate provisions of the Act, the certification of the price proposed is justified to assure the maintenance of adequate service in the public interest." (Infra, p. 44a.)

This completely refutes the statement that the Commission did not carefully scrutinize the price proposed.

Admittedly there may be difference of judgment as to what constitutes a responsible reaction; however, considering the initial price proposed against the background of prices which had been certificated and unsuccessfully attacked, and considering the more recently certificated prices which were beyond judicial review and ranged from 1½¢ to 2.65¢ per MCF more than the proposed price,[9] it is submitted that the Commission reacted MOST RESPONSIBLY TO THE FACTS PRESENTED IN THIS CASE. In any event the responsibleness of such reaction is to be viewed with reference to public convenience and necessity, and Congress has delegated to the Federal Power Commission, rather than to a reviewing court, the discretion to

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[9] App. 70, 74, 75, 76.
22.35¢ per MCF to Gulf Interstate, May 30, 1953;
21.75¢ per MCF to American Louisiana, May 9, 1955, *Memphis Light, Gas & Water Div.* v. *F.P.C.*, (CADC 1957), 243 F. 2d 628;
23.675¢ per MCF to Southern Natural; and
24.05¢ per MCF to Trunkline, *Public Service Com.* v. *F. P. C.*, (CADC 1960), 284 F. 2d 200.
Note also Statement of General Policy No. 61-1, as amended, 25 Fed. Reg. 13970 fixing an area price for offshore South Louisiana of 21.5¢ per MCF plus tax reimbursement.

find and protect this public interest. Thus the question of responsibleness of a particular reaction based on substantial evidence is beyond the authority of the Court to question. There are many facets of public interest. Price is a primary factor but nevertheless only one of many factors to be considered. The evidence here covered most, if not all, factors, and as indicated by the Commission's opinion, it considered the many factors giving primary consideration to price. The Commission's findings were clearly supported by the evidence in the record. The price was NOT out of line when compared with prior certificated prices such as the 1953 certificates under which 375 million cubic feet of gas were being delivered each day at 22.35¢ per MCF (App. 75-76); 1955 certificates under which 300 million cubic feet of gas were being delivered each day at 21.75¢ per MCF (App. 75-76), and the later certificates under which 298 million cubic feet were being delivered at 23.675¢ per MCF (App. 74); and 135 million cubic feet were delivered at 24.05¢ per MCF (App. 70). Transco needed this gas (App. 51-52) and only one of its many customers objected to the sale price (App. 334). This sale will not trigger the price of any other sale by favored nation clauses or otherwise (App. 49-50, 70, 74, 76). This contract has no favored nation clause or price redetermination clause (App. 137-138). The Commission assumed, although the record does not explicitly show, that this sale will have a slight effect on the rates of the purchaser. Such slight increase, if any, was outweighed by benefits to the public (App. 333, infra, p. 39a).

This evidence is substantial. It supports the Commission's conclusions. The Court below independently weighed and evaluated this evidence. Such action is shown by the statement that the Commission relied "too strongly" on one

facet of public convenience rather than another (infra, p. 2a). This is an obvious invasion of the discretionary field delegated to the Commission and is wholly beyond the province of the reviewing court, as has been repeatedly held. As Justice Reed said in *Gray* v. *Powell* (1941), 314 U. S. 402, 412:

> "Where as here a determination has been left to an administrative body, this delegation will be respected and the administrative conclusion left untouched . . . Although we have here no dispute as to the evidentiary facts, that does not permit a court to substitute its judgment for that of the Director."

Again in *Swayne & Hoyt* v. *United States*, (1937), 300 U. S. 297, Justice Stone said:

> "Even though upon a consideration of all the evidence a court might reach a different conclusion, it is not authorized to substitute its own for the administrative judgment."

Justices Black and Douglas in concurring in *Federal Power Commission* v. *Natural Gas Pipeline Company*, (1942), 315 U.S. 575, one of the earliest cases in this Court dealing with rules for reviewing Commission decisions under the Act, criticized the idea that due process means "reasonableness judicially determined" and "conclusions of judges substituted for those of legislatures." (601). They pointed out that the Act provides only for limited review, and that findings of the Commission as to fact shall be conclusive if supported by substantial evidence, Section 19(b) of the Act. See also Justice Frankfurter's concurring opinion (610); *United States* v. *Louisville & Nashville RR Co.* (1914), 235 U.S. 314, 320; *Securities and Exchange Commission* v. *Chenery Corp.*, (1947), 332 U.S. 194, 207; *Rochester Telephone Co.* v. *United States* (1939), 307 U.S.

125, 146; and *Interstate Commerce Commission* v. *Illinois Central Ry. Co.* (1910), 215 U.S. 452.

Judge Brown's dissent below again is pertinent:

> "If there was ever a place where truly it could be said that this called for the most expert judgment of those skilled in the problem, this must be one." (Infra, p. 16a).

The Commission discretion, arrived at after analysis of the facts supporting it, should not be overturned.

CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, for each and all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully urged that this petition for a writ of certiorari be granted.

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May, 1961

APPENDIX A

IN THE

United States Court of Appeals

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 18113

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,
Respondent.

Petition for Review of an Order of the Federal Power Commission.

(February 22, 1961.)

Before: TUTTLE, Chief Judge, and BROWN and WISDOM, Circuit Judges.

TUTTLE, Chief Judge:

The issue here presented is identical with that decided this same date in *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *F. P. C.*, 18,112, in this Court. We conclude that for the reasons set out in that case the Commission erred in issuing an unconditional permanent certificate to the Superior Oil Company and Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company in the consolidated proceedings with an initial price of 21.4 cents per Mcf plus 75% of any new taxes to be levied (no state taxes are applicable because this is a supply of

off-shore gas beyond the state boundaries). The record does not disclose that the Commission gave "most careful scrutiny" and responded with "most responsible reaction" to the initial price proposals required by the Supreme Court in *Atlantic Refining Co.* v. *Public Service Com. of New York*, 360 U.S. 378, 391 (popularly known as the CATCO case).

As we have pointed out in the companion case No. 18,112, the record makes it clear that the finding of public necessity and convenience here is based too strongly on the fact that arm's length dealing and the effect of supply and demand required Transco to agree to the disputed price, rather than that the price had any relation to what might ultimately be found to be a just and reasonable price.

The certificating of a price that, as the Commission here agrees would probably be collected for several years without possibility of refund of any excess sums, does not, we think, comport with the teaching of the Supreme Court in the *Atlantic Refining Company* case. See also *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *F. P. C.*, 9 Cir., . . . F. 2d . . . , decided October 31, 1960, and *Public Service Com. of New York* v. *F. P. C.*, D.C. Cir. . . . F. 2d . . . , decided December 8, 1960.

The order of the Commission is VACATED and the proceedings REMANDED for further appropriate action. BROWN, Circuit Judge: I dissent.

IN THE

United States Court of Appeals

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 18112

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,
Respondent.

No. 18113

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,
Respondent.

Petitions for Review of Orders of the Federal Power Commission.

(February 23, 1961.)

Before: TUTTLE, Chief Judge, and BROWN and WISDOM, Circuit Judges.

BROWN, Circuit Judge, dissenting: With the score now four down and none to go[1] and eleven distinguished judges arrayed unanimously against but one, the prospect of a dissent is indeed a formidable one. To the usual one of likely ineffectiveness, it runs the additional risk of marking its author presumptuous, arrogant or ignorant. But with all the deference which this distinguished company of judges inspire, I cannot down the conviction that this decision, and the others on substantially the same record, are wrong. More than that, claiming that the duty to hold the line is imperative because the administrative process creaks with sluggish inefficiencies, the consequence of this action is to add to that delay. That would be a small price, I suppose, were something to be gained. But by the nature of things — and here the "thing" is the *voluntary*, non-compulsory nature of the *first* sale of gas by a producer in the midst of an insatiable expanding demand for gas — the evidence to be offered on remand to the Commission will perhaps have formal attributes making it more imposing, but in actuality it will be what is now known and proved. The Commission will not in fact be better informed on fact. It will merely have a record — probably stupendous in length, in size and number of exhibits and in avoir-

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[1] Public Service Commission of New York v. FPC, D.C. Cir., 1960 [No. 15461, Dec. 8, 1960], . . . F. 2d . . . , Public Service Commission of New York v. FPC, D.C. Cir., 1960 [No. 15412, Dec. 8, 1960], . . . F. 2d . . . ; United Gas Improvement Company v. FPC, 9 Cir., 1960, 283 F. 2d 817; United Gas Improvement Company v. FPC, 10 Cir., 1961 [No. 6280, Jan. 1961], . . . F. 2d . . . , announced subsequent to the preparation of the majority opinion; and finally the two cases of this Court.

dupois weight[2] — to establish what it now knows and on which knowledge Congress declared it was entitled to determine whether the public interest called for the certification of a new sale of gas for resale.

Running through the majority's decision are assumptions or conclusions which I regard as basic errors. The decision misapprehends what it was that *CATCO* condemned. The opinion mistakenly delineates the mission of the FPC and a reviewing court as one to hold down prices. It erroneously equates regard for the protection of the ultimate consumer with some character of duty to prohibit price increases. In doing so, it loses sight of the fact that neither the FPC nor a reviewing court — including even the highest one — has any power to digress from the statutory duty or standard. Discussing these standards, there is interlaced in every conclusion a confusion of the "just and reasonable" test for rates under §§4 and 5 with the requirement for certificating a new service that "is or will be required by the present or future public convenience and necessity * * *," §7(e).

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[2] The target for criticism of delay and lumbering inefficiency as recent quasi public reports reflect, is generally the administrative agency. But judges hearkening unto advocates protesting the absence of record "proof" must bear some of the responsibility. The problem is of national concern. This is attested by the President's action on the recommendation of the Judicial Conference for the creation of a Permanent Conference on Administrative Procedure. Many share the hope that Chief Judge Prettyman, now active in the formulation of such a conference, will help lead us from a sometime-judge-made wilderness.

It is this staggering administrative problem[3] which should itself make us cautious lest we add unwittingly to it. What we hold in these two cases, and that by our sister Circuits in the others, note 1, supra, is but the infinitesimal drop in the bucket — perhaps more accurately called a molecule out of trillions of cubic feet of gas. For if this unindicated additional evidence is required in these, so must it be in everyone of the hundreds soon to follow if the ever increasing demand of consumers for more and more gas is to be met. The alternative, of course, is to impose some sort of price condition on every certificate. But that is not administration under law. That is the mechanical application of an arbitrary practice as the easy way out.

I do not think *CATCO* had any such consequences in mind.

Worse than creating this administrative Jack-and-the-bean stalk, the requirements of the majority, adopting especially those voiced by the Ninth Circuit, see note 1, supra, brings about an administrative impasse. A local distributing company such as UGI and PSC, whether

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[3] The FCP in its celebrated opinion No. 338 in the Phillips Petroleum Company rate case [September 28, 1960], ... FPC ....., took candid note of this. With 3,372 independent producers with rates on file plus 15,435 non-filing co-owners, the Commission had then to deal with 11,091 rate schedules with 33,231 supplements. At that time 3,278 rate increase filings of 570 producers were under suspension awaiting hearing. Unless staff and budget relief is granted, it will take 13 years to dispose of these 2313 cases. In the meantime another 6500 cases would have been filed. This led the Commission to summarize it this way. "Thus, if our present staff were immediately tripled, and if all new employees would be as competent as those we now have, we would not reach a current status in our independent producer rate work until 2043 A.D. — eighty-two and one half years from now. Of course, we could expect to improve our techniques and thus shorten the time required to process these cases. If we increased our efficiency one thousand percent, we would achieve current status in 1968 — eight and two tenths years from now. * * *"

possessing an opportunity to intervene "as a matter of right," or not, have it within their power to prevent any rate from being considered by the FPC as evidence of an existing "line." If they are allowed to intervene, they may appeal the FPC certification as they have done here. Pending the decision of the appeal, that purchase — because it is somehow under a cloud or is "suspect" — has no legal existence as evidence. If intervention is denied for the reason, say, that the likely impact of such rate on any such distributor is too remote, then that rate may not be used as evidence of the line simply because the one challenging the instant rate was denied the right to attack the prior rate offered as evidence of the line. It is no answer to say that this infirmity terminates when the appellate process in such instances is completed. In the meantime, the current applicant for certificate can get nothing. He may not use the other rates to prove the increased "line." That means, of course, that the line will remain static, that it may never increase. If *CATCO* purports to forecast that as a necessary result, I find no basis in the Natural Gas Act for it.

This Court as much as declares that this is required. For the key to its opinion is likely found in these words:

> "We think it too plain for argument that the first court tested and court approved certificated sale at a price much higher than any theretofore certificated according to the standards found by the reviewing court to be consonant with CATCO will unquestionably breach 'the line.' Such, we think, would be the effect of our approval of the certificated price in this case."

That has disturbing implications. Does it mean that we have some mission not to decide a case lest it be capable of subsequent use as evidence of a higher "line"? If, as the Court puts it, "the standards found by the reviewing

court to be consonant with CATCO" forbid, as the majority and these other cases hold, reliance upon any increased price until such certification is court-approved, how may there ever be a price higher than pre-CATCO?

The fundamental error in all of this is that it is a court intrusion on the expertise committed by Congress to the FPC. Nothing under §19(b) of the Act makes FPC action a nullity while it is being challenged in court. The record of this Court in denying applications for stay in rate orders shows that we regard Commission decisions as of continuing vitality unless some strong circumstance compels holding them in abeyance. *Tennessee Gas Transmission Co.* v. *FPC* 5 Cir., 1960, 283 F.2d 729. Just what is there about this which withholds the imprimatur of law until the judge has spoken? Does the whole machine stop when an appeal is taken? In the meantime, what happens to the Commission's serious duty to consider the imperative public interest in obtaining an assured supply to satisfy the insatiable demand for more and more gas?

Of course, I may not ignore the emphatic importance which CATCO attributes to price. But what that case had to deal with reflects no purpose in what was there said to make the §7 public convenience standard one merely of a simple arithmetical inquiry: is this price higher? Nor was it intended that if the answer were "yes" that that automatically made it contrary to public convenience and necessity thereby setting automatically in train the price condition.

CATCO came up on a bare bones record with some macabre-like implications. There was no proof whatsoever of the need for the gas, the likelihood that it would be lost to the interstate market if the sale were not certificated, or the relation of the proposed 21.5c mcf price to

others. Worse than that, it showed that twice the Commission was so disturbed about price that it imposed a price condition. This was followed by its final order in which, under the coercive economic pressures which the nature of this Act gives to non-jurisdictional producers, it capitulated presumably out of regard for what it considered was an imperative need for this large gas supply.

It was this apparent legal indifference to price as an element which was condemned by what the majority calls the "strictures" of CATCO. The element must be taken into account and this "requires a most careful scrutiny and responsible reaction to initial price proposals of producers under §7." 360 U.S. at 391. While rates are not the only factor under §7 (e), the historic increase in the cost of gas "does make price a consideration of prime importance." 360 U.S. at 391. This leads the Court to conclude that "Where the application on its face or on presentation of evidence signals the existence of a situation that probably would not be in the public interest, a permanent certificate should not be issued." 360 U.S. 391.

But this was certainly no declaration as the law of the Meads and Persians which altereth not, that a price ostensibly higher than the last one ipso facto "signals the existence of a situation * * * not * * * in the public interest * * *." Nor is that to be found in these later comments of the Court. "Where the proposed price is not in keeping with the public interest because it is out of line or because its approval might result in a triggering of general price rises or an increase in the applicant's existing rates by reason of 'favored nation' clauses or otherwise, the Commission in the exercise of its discretion might attach such conditions as it believes necessary." 360 U.S. at 391.

A price may be higher and yet quite "in line." If thus "in line" it does not come within the category condemned

by the Court as one "not in keeping with the public interest." And it is at this point that the nature of the administrative function and the nature of the judicial function be carefully distinguished. What is "out of line" is primarily for the judgment of the administrative agency charged with the effectuation of the total policy of Congress. CATCO now requires that responsible inquiry be made by the FPC. But CATCO does not undertake to spell out just *what* the line is or *how* the Commission is to go about determining it. The term "out of line" — nowhere found in the Natural Gas Act — is a handy colloquialism which, if it means anything at all, must convey the connotation of the more familiar term "abuse of discretion" — i. e., is the proposed increase so great as to indicate arbitrary action without reasonable support in the practicalities of the regulated gas industry?

Obviously the Court could not have meant the term to be, as a matter of law, any price which exceeds in any degree the last and highest one. For that would have been to ignore the unique rate mechanism of the Natural Gas Act which commits rate *fixing* to the gas producer. *United Gas Pipe Line Co.* v. *Mobile Gas Service Corp.* 1956, 350 U.S. 332, 76 S.Ct. 373, 100 L.Ed. 373 *United Gas Pipe Line Co.* v. *Memphis Light Gas and Water Div.*, 1958, 358 U.S. 103, 79 S.Ct. 194, 3 L. Ed. 2d 153. While any such increase is subject to limited suspension and collection under bond under §4 and is always subject to review under §5 automatic stepped up escalation increases become the legally effective rate. The "going rate is therefore more than the last and most recent §7 certification of a new sale. It must take into account the geographically relevant currently collectible rates under long existing certificates or rate schedules. This, of course, calls for the nicest of delicate judgments running the whole gamut of the gas

industry on the type or kind of gas, the area, field, production problems, volumes and the like.

It is inescapable that there will always be some difference —if not on the day of certification, then at some future time as this complex of thousands of rates undergoes its automatice undulations. The question then is: *who* is to measure the difference? More important, *who* is to determine whether the difference is too much?

The Commission, with the teaching of CATCO before it, considered that these sales were required by the public convenience and necessity and when contrasted with comparable sales, the price was not out of line. Now the majority holds that there is no evidence to support it and remands the case either for more evidence or the imposition of some unindicated conditions. The Court is vague as to the infirmities of the proof. It points out that United's system-wide average cost was 11.7¢ mcf and that United had been purchasing gas in 1954 at a price from 9 to 12¢ mcf. With so much water over the dam since 1954, I am at a loss to understand how that year has anything to do with a "line" in 1958. Actually, as the opinion reflects in the quoted testimony from United's Vice President, that year marked the beginning of 20¢ gas under certifications for new sales of huge volumes.[4]

While I have some trouble in discerning just what it is the majority concludes, it does not seem likely that it considers this difference of 1½¢ between 20¢ and 21.5¢ as itself "out of line." Somehow the Court wants to ignore

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[4] This refers to the certificates issued in 1953 and 1954 in the Matter of Gulf Interstate Gas Company, Docket No. G-2058, opinion 251, 12 FPC 116, May 20, 1953; and the Matter of American Louisiana Pipe Line Company, Docket No. G-2306, opinion 276, 6 PUR 3d 476, October 1, 1954.

the actual fact of those significant certifications which obviously had an influence in subsequent price levels.[5] It concludes that we must go back to 1954 when it says:

> "The only evidence on this record that supports such 'out of line' price is the fact that it was negotiated at arm's length and was required by the intense competition. This, as we have said, is not enough. It was clearly incumbent on the proponent of such a rate to make some showing of the 'reason why' (as it was expressed in the CATCO opinion) 21½ cents, excluding tax, is a proper initial rate in 1958 when the parties were freely contracting in 1954 at half that figure."

Two questions immediately arise: first, how did the Court reach this legal conclusion? Second, what sort of hearing is contemplated on the remand, i.e., what kind of evidence will constitute the "showing of the 'reason why' "?

The first is the more readily answered. Running throughout the Court's opinion is the confusion of the "just and reasonable" standard for rates under §§4 and 5 with the public convenience and necessity test of §7. It emphasizes this by stating of our decision in *Bel Oil Corp. v. FPC*, 5 Cir., 1958, 255 F.2d 542, 553, that "A price paid for gas as the result of arm's length bargaining with the producer is not, merely because bargained for in a highly competitive market, 'just and reasonable' within the intendment of the Natural Gas Act." Presumably it is on this that the Court knocks out the undisputed evidence and the caetegorical finding of the Commission that these contracts were consummated after vigorous, genuine arm's length bargaining. But *Bel Oil* must be read in the light of

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[5] UGI and PSC acknowledge that the price level increased to at least 17¢ and it is a rate of 17¢ to 18¢ which they suggest as a price condition. They do not, therefore, insist on rolling it back to 1954.

our subsequent opinion in *Forest Oil Corp.* v. *FPC* 5 Cir., 1959, 263 F.2d 622, which recognizes that the Commission in a rate proceeding is entitled to consider areas or field factors.[6] And, of course, no one questions that the price involved here is the area price.

But apart from the intrinsic standard to test "just and reasonable" the majority treats the certification problem as though it were a rate hearing. It does this in the plainest of words. It likens the CATCO criticism of FPC to the Com-

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[6] There we said: "If the Commission finds that a rate is reasonable to the consuming public it need not reject such rate as not being just and reasonable merely because it will yield to a particular producer more than the very minimum required by constitutional standards or more by way of net yield than is returned to another producer in the same well or field, especially if such result follows from a considered decision by the Commission that a uniform price for all the producers or a single well or a single field is not only reasonable but is also highly desirable for convenience of administration. This is what the Commission did in Order No. 316 [Pan American Petroleum Corporation et al]."

This idea of a field or area price now seems to bear fruition in the Area Price Levels Schedules set forth in the statement of General Policy No. 61-1 September 28, 1960, amended to include South Louisiana October 25, 1960, and now promulgated in the form of an official regulation, see .....

Our decision and opinion in that case strongly influenced the Commission in the Phillips Petroleum Company decision opinion No. 338, note 3, supra, in which it abandons the effort to determine rates on the fair rate of return point of departure theory of City of Detroit v. FPC, D.C.Cir., 1956, 230 F.2d 810. As to this, it said, "If this contention is correct, then, as a practical matter, adequate regulation of producers appears to be impossible under existing law.

"Nowhere in the Natural Gas Act is there as much as one word which indicates that this Commission must use a rate base in determining just and reasonable rates. The correct construction of the Natural Gas Act on this question, both as a legal and as a practical matter has been made by the Court of Appeals of the Fifth Circuit in Forest Oil Corporation v. FPC • • •."

mission's criticism of §4 rate increases substantiated only by showing of arm's length bargaining and a competitive field price. It follows this with the statement, "Thus, at the very threshold of the regulating procedure newly contracting producers were being permitted to charge prices for their gas that were in some instances 30% to 50% higher than earlier prices that were at the very time being suspended by the Commission pending hearings under Section 4 procedures. * * *" That, in turn, leads it to this main conclusion: "Apart from any decision of the Supreme Court, it does not seem reasonable or consistent with any understandable policy of Congress that the Commission would, as an illustration, permit the filing of initial price of 20 or 20½ cents, resulting in the collection of that rate until set aside by a Section 5 proceeding * * * and, on the same day, suspend an automatic increase under an escalation clause from 9 to 15 cents."

Presumably the majority states "Apart from any decision of the Supreme Court" purposefully. For surely CATCO does not warrant any such conclusion. On the contrary, that decision sought to make very clear that the two problems were quite distinct and that price was not to be measured in terms of "just and reasonable." The Court states, "It is true that the Act does not require a determination of just and reasonable rates in a §7 proceeding as it does in one under either §4 or §5. Nor do we hold that a 'just and reasonable' rate hearing is a prerequisite to the issuance of producer certificates." 360 U.S. at 390-391.

Apart from the CATCO decision the statute itself bears evidence that different things are involved in §4, §5 and §7. It is not for us to say that Congress ought to have made all of the elements of these three sections and the balance of the Act consistent. The standard for a new service or a new sale is not that the proposed price is "just and reason-

able" but that the proposed service at the proposed price "is or will be required by the present or future public convenience and necessity." That can account for quite dissimilar actions as between an application for a new certificate and a request to increase a rate under an old one. In the one the standard is public convenience and necessity. As to that, rates are not "the only factor bearing on the public convenience and necessity, for §7(e) requires the Commission to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest." 360 U.S. at 391. In the other the inquiry is what rate is "just and reasonable"?

One thing which surely makes a vital distinction is the difference between the power and the function of the Commission is the one as compared with the other. As to a sale under an existing certificate the gas is dedicated to jurisdictional use for the life of the reserves. *Sun Oil Co.* v. *FPC*, 1960, 364 U.S. 170, 80 S.Ct. 1388, 4 L.Ed.2d 1639; *Sunray Mid-Continent Oil Co.* v. *FPC*, 1960, 364 U.S. 137, 80 S.Ct. 1392, 4 L.Ed. 2d 1623. The Commission need not concern itself with the availability of that supply of gas. What, and all it need consider, is the price which will be just and reasonable to producer, consumer and the public alike.

What a different function it bears as to a proposed new sale. A new and perhaps overriding consideration now comes into play. That is the demand for gas. Here it is no longer the relatively "simple" task of drawing the line of just and reasonable. Now the question is not how much to pay, but how badly is this gas needed? At this point it is not for judges to rewrite the law. This may appear to give gas producers an economic ax. But that is the way the law was written. Until the sale is certificated, there is "nothing illegal in the [producers'] rejection of the alternative price proposed by the Commission and their standing firm on their own." 360 U.S. at 388.

Of course, CATCO now teaches that the Commission may not be overriden completely by this "overriding" consideration. If the price insisted upon is one which the Commission after careful consideration thinks will work a real wrong on the public interest, the minimum it must do is issue a conditional certificate. But there is in this a risk to the vital public interest. Insistence on a price condition in a borderline case may result in the producer withdrawing the application altogether. It is easy to say that if that happens, all well and good, because no one should be given that much power over the control of precious natural resources so badly needed. But what American industry and its exploding metropolitan-based population needs is not such politico-economic platitudes. What it needs is gas. And it is initially in the hands of the Commission to determine whether gas tentatively proffered is finally to be delivered. The risk to the public interest in the possible withdrawal of proposed sales becomes only more acute if, as UGI and PSC urge, and this Court now holds, the Commission should automatically impose a price condition if a price proposed in 1960, or 1970, or 1980 is greater than 1954.

If there ever was a place where truly it could be said that this called for the most expert judgment of those skilled in the problem, this must be one. Not only does it call for a nice balancing of demand and need against possible price impact, but it necessarily calls for a prescience as to the future. *United States* v. *Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company*, 1945, 325 U.S. 236, 66 S.Ct. 75, 90 L.Ed. 38. We are dealing with long term contracts which are long term whether so written or not, *Sun Oil Company* v. *FPC*, 1960, 364 U.S. 170, 80 S.Ct. 1388, 4 L.Ed. 2d. 1639. When faced with the problem in 1961 of securing for the interstate regulated market gas reserves in the trillions of cubic feet that will be producing

in the year 1980, and conceivably in the year 2000, when our population will be 272,557,000 [7] and over 350 million, I doubt seriously that the Supreme Court meant to declare for all time that a cent or two cents difference between the proffered price and the most recent one, must compel the Commission to risk the loss of this urgently needed gas.

What I am saying is that this must be a judgment for the Commission. Judgment is more than a simple arithmetical comparison of two prices. A considerable latitude must be granted the Commission. This may be safely done if, in a twilight zone case, the Commission determines that the public interest is best served by securing a perpetual dedication of the gas reserves, it still has the potent remedy of a §5 hearing. If the Commission is not occupied and preoccupied with useless hearings of the kind we now order, I am confident that it could, with some needed help from Congress for an adequate staff, proceed to expeditious decision on the issue of "just and reasonable" rates.

So we come, as they say in field notes, to the place of beginning. What sort of hearing is to be had on remand?

Surely it will be an affectation to have further proof on the imperative need of United and Transco for this gas. This was no CATCO record. Here the proof abundantly shows the extent of their needs and the supply to satisfy those needs. In the *Sun* case the reserves are calculated to be 372 billion cubic feet. Sun is dedicating 10,259 acres to the performance of the agreement with United. The majority repeats verbatim with apparent approval the Commission's finding that "United shows it has need of, and a demand for, this Belle I[illegible] gas to meet the present

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[7] Statistical Abstract of the United States 1960, No. 3, *Projections of the Total Population*, at p. 6.

and future requirements of its customers. United now delivers more than one trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year to its customers and the demand on it for additional natural gas increases each year." As to the sale by Superior to Transco, the evidence supports without any serious attack all of the Commission's conclusion. "Transco" currently uses approximately one-half trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year. The Superior reserves will meet Transco's system supply for about six months, thereby assisting the company to maintain the inventory of its system gas supply in the face of heavy annual depletion and ever-increasing annual demands by Transco's customers." Superior "owns approximately 30 percent of the dedicated reserves in" this off shore field and by its acquisition of the reserves "Transco has been able to acquire what in the opinion of the company is probably the largest single reserve ever contracted by Transco." The "facts disclose that Southern Louisiana is the only area in which Transco has been able to acquire substantial volumes of uncommitted reserves during the past two years. It has sought unsuccessfully to acquire additional reserves at an initial price price of 17c, and is obliged, if it is to continue to meet the customer requirements it has undertaken to meet, to pay producers in Southern Louisiana a price which will induce them to sell the gas."

What then about the price? What sort of evidence will there be, and what in reality will it teach, as a "showing of the 'reason why' • • • 21-½ cents • • • is a proper initial rate in 1958 when the parties were freely contracting in 1954 at half that figure."?

There may be good basis for deploring it, for wishing that it had not come to pass, but there can be no doubt as to why 21-½c was agreed upon as the price in 1958. That was the result of the ever-increasing demand for gas and

relative lack of supply. This is the result of an interplay of several factors, all of which must be known to the Commission. The first is the tremendous post-war investment in long line transmission system. Billions of dollars have been spent to bring this gas to metropolitan and industrial markets.[8] Gas which, before the war, had little economic value, has increasingly been the subject of an evergrowing demand. The more pipelines built, the more the consuming areas have converted to gas. The greater the conversion, the more the demand.

Had this operated in a traditional public utility field, regulation of the price would have restrained the impact of demand on supply. Here comes into play the second factor. We are not really dealing with a service. An "independent producer," Mr. Justice Harlan pointed out, "is unique among the objects of public-utility regulation because it is not engaged in rendering a service to the public in the conventional sense of that concept, but rather simply in selling a commodity which it owns. * * *" *Sunray Oil Co.* v. *FPC*, 364 U.S. 137, 160 (dissenting). The producer is free of regulation until he sells and is certificated. No one may compel him to sell. He has no duty to sell at a "just and reasonable" rate. Indeed, an operator *vis-a-vis* his co-owners probably has the legal duty to exact what the traffic will bear. As it is entirely a voluntary thing whether a person wishes to subject himself and his specific gas reserves to public regulation, that decision is normally determined by *price*. Third, as between prospective purchasers, and especially long line transmission systems, there is no public authority to determine who shall have the right to procure gas from a prospective producer-

[8] I do not for the moment suggest these expenditures constitute an element of the producers' fair price, whether on a rate base or otherwise.

seller. That means that to meet the increasing demand resulting from their expanded facilities (factor one above), the public utility buyers now compete with one another in obtaining gas from the free agent — the producer under no compulsion to sell. Finally, there is competition by intrastate users, and non-jurisdictional industrial users. *FPC* v. *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corp.* 1961, ... U.S.....S.Ct..... .....L.Ed.2d..... [January 23, 1961, Nos. 45 & 46].

The proof was uncontradicted that United and Transco had tried earnestly to obtain these needed major supplies of gas at a lower price. They were unsuccessful because this was now the market. No one doubts the sincerity or truthfulness of these witnesses. No one has even faintly suggested that there will be found any witness anywhere who will say that gas in those volumes under these conditions will be obtainable in Southern Louisiana at the figure now suggested by UGI and PSC of 17-18¢ mcf.

What good then is to be served by a hearing? How can there be any other explanation of the "reason why" gas cannot be purchased in 1958 at 1954 prices? Is the need for a record to substantiate administrative action so much a legal formalism that we compel an overworked and understaffed agency to hold a hearing that will only gild the lilly?

Things would be different had the Commission, as it did in CATCO, capitulated on the element of price. Here against a known, informed judgment born of long experience and knowledge of the general price levels in the neighborhood of 20¢, it reached the conclusion that this price was consistent with the public convenience and necessity. All of the elaborate evidence, charts and exhibits, economic studies, estimates of gas reserves, and the like cannot possibly change the picture which it knew at the

time these orders were entered and which it has known all along.

I look at this as though I were sitting in the Commission's seat. Faced with our order of remand "for further appropriate action," what action should be taken? Hold a hearing to develop what is already known? Hold a hearing to determine that the inevitable is really so, and that producers are free to offer or not offer gas for sale at the current market price? Or is this intended merely as an invitation to impose automatically some kind of price condition? If so, where will it be fixed? Where does the does the figure 17-18¢ proposed by UGI and PSC come from? Finally, the Commission can well ask, how are we ever to catch up with the staggering load of §4 and §5 proceedings if to that burden we must now add two others — a full dress rehearsal hearing for every certification or the equivalent of a §4 suspension proceeding through the guise of a price condition?[9]

I am confident of only one thing: this case will be back several years and thousands of pages later. No one will know more than is known now.

I therefore respectfully dissent.

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[9] To be effective as a protection for the consumer and at the same time assure ultimate collection by the seller of a "just and reasonable" rate from the time of commencement of the service by the conditional certificate would probably take the form of a specified price with a right to file for an immediate increase with or without the five-months' suspension under §4. This would then take its place with all of the other §4 proceedings. During fiscal 1959 the Commission suspended 1,091 rates. At that year end rate filings suspended totaled 2,323. FPC, *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report*, p. 82 (1959). The FPC's brief tells us that the revenue increments representing the difference between the contingent rates and prior rates exceeded $110 millions in fiscal 1959. Forty percent of gross revenues collected are under §4 suspensions.

IN THE

United States Court of Appeals

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 18112

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,
Respondent.

Petition for Review of an Order of the Federal Power Commission.

(February 22, 1961.)

Before: TUTTLE, Chief Judge, and BROWN and WISDOM, Circuit Judges.

TUTTLE, Chief Judge:

This case presents the identical problem heretofore resolved by the Courts of Appeal for the 9th Circuit in *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *F. P. C.*, . . . F. 2d . . . , and the District of Columbia Circuit in *New York Public Service Commission* v. *F. P. C.*, . . . F. 2d . . . , decided December 8, 1960, 29 Law Week, 2273 and now pending after argument in a companion case in the 10th Circuit. Petitioner here also contends that if has been resolved by the United States Supreme Court by directing a reversal (see 361

U.S. 195) of the 3rd Circuit decision in *United Gas Improvement Company* v. *F. P. C.*, 269 F. 2d 865.

The issue is whether the Commission erred in granting a certificate of public necessity and convenience without condition to Sun Oil Company authorizing it to sell gas produced from the Belle Isle Field in Southern Louisiana at an initial base price of 21½¢ per Mcf, plus reimbursement of Louisiana severance and gathering tax of 2.3¢ per Mcf, plus 75% of any new taxes thereafter imposed. The issue must be resolved by a determination whether the Commission observed the standards requiring the "most careful scrutiny and responsible reaction" which the Supreme Court said is required to be given by the Commission to "initial price proposals under Section 7" of the Natural Gas Act, 15 U.S.C.A. §717(f). *Atlantic Refining Co.* v. *Public Service Commission of New York*, 360 U.S. 378, 391.

Not only the deference due the studied and careful conclusions of the two other Courts of Appeals, but on our own study of the Atlantic Refining Company case (now known throughout the industry as the CATCO case) compels us to conclude, as the other courts did, that the record before us does not support the determination that the certificate of public necessity and convenience should unconditionally issue in light of the strictures in the CATCO decision.

The essential facts developed in the record before us are: The Sun Oil Company filed an application on May 19, 1958, under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act, seeking a disclaimer of jurisdiction or in lieu thereof a certificate of public convenience and necessity authorizing the sale of natural gas to the United Gas Pipe Line Company (United) from Sun's onshore production in the Belle Isle Field, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. Sun is a New Jersey corporation. Its principal place of business is located at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Its application was numbered G-15122.

The United Gas Pipe Line Company also filed an application on May 19, 1958, under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act, seeking a certificate of public convenience and necessity authorizing it to construct and operate certain facilities, estimated to cost $1,176,175.00, to connect with its presently existing natural gas transmission system, which would enable it to purchase, receive and transport in interstate commerce the natural gas produced by Sun in the Belle Isle Field in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana.

By an order issued on January 5, 1959, the Commission permitted the interventions of United Gas Improvement Company and Public Service Commission of New York.

As provided in the Commission notice dated November 26, 1958, a hearing was convened on December 30, 1958, but, on account of the petition to intervene by U.G.I. and the notice of intervention by PSC-NY, was recessed to January 27, 1959, on which date a formal hearing was held and concluded.

The source of the natural gas to be produced by Sun and sold to United, if certificated herein, is from leases or other interests in minerals owned or controlled by Sun in the Belle Isle Field, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. No gas is to be purchased by Sun from third parties to effectuate this proposed sale. The Belle Isle Field is not a new discovery. The discovery well was drilled in 1940. Since then Sun has drilled some sixty-five or more wells in this field; twenty-one were dry holes. The record shows that at the date of this hearing Sun had in this field eight producing gas wells, twenty-seven producing oil wells and ten temporarily abandoned wells that are to be recompleted as gas wells. There has been continuous exploration in the field since the discovery of the original gas well in 1940. The gas being produced in the Belle Isle Field is sweet, dehydrated gas.

the major portion being gas well gas. Under the terms of the sales agreement Sun will dehydrate the gas being sold to United.

United submitted an offer to Sun for the Belle Isle Field gas early in February, 1958. After much negotiating and several bargaining sessions a sales agreement was executed in May, 1958. Each party to the sales agreement was willing and interested in concluding a contract but neither party was under any compulsion to do so. This record shows no affiliation betwen Sun or United and the two companies have no common officers or directors. United says it conducted its negotiations, which culminated in an agreement, with the objective of purchasing the Belle Isle gas from Sun on terms suitable to United and at the lowest possible price.

United shows it has need of, and a demand for, this Belle Isle gas to meet the present and future requirements of its customers. United now delivers more than one trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year to its customers and the demand on it for additional natural gas increases each year. United agrees to pay, and Sun agrees to sell, the Belle Isle Field natural gas for an initial price of 21.5 cents per Mcf at 15.025 psia plus state taxes, which are shown to be 2.3 cents per Mcf, thus producing a total cost price to United of 23.8 cents per Mcf. The sale agreement provides for 2 cents increase in price per Mcf each four-year period of the twenty-year agreement until a total price of 29.5 cents per Mcf, plus tax, is reached. United says that Belle Isle Field is exceptionally well located for them since it is approximately 12 miles from a United 26-inch and a 30-inch main pipeline. Because of the proximity of this gas to its system main line United was anxious to acquire

the total field production feeling it to be in the best interests of its customers by adding this sizeable reserve.

The other sales agreements of United do not contain a "favored nation" clause, hence existing contracts will not be triggered into higher prices by this contract.

United contends, if they expected to purchase this gas, and they maintain they need it, that the demand upon them for additional gas supplies by their present customers requires them to purchase same for the public convenience and necessity, therefore in order to purchase this gas they would be required to offer Sun the current market price, or better, hence the 21.5 cents per Mcf offer.

United's system-wide average cost of gas in 1957 was estimated to be 11.7 cents per Mcf — a United witness testified it had probably gone up a cent or a cent and a half per Mcf in 1958 — and this purchase of the Belle Isle Field gas would increase this average cost by less than one tenth of one cent per Mcf. The intervenors contend any certificate issued by the Commission should be conditioned to a maximum of 17 cents to 18 cents per Mcf.

As we have previously stated in *Bel Oil Corp.* v. *F. P. C.*, 5 Cir., 255 F. 2d 548, 553, a price paid for gas as the result of arm's length bargaining with the producer is not, merely because bargained for in a highly competitive market, "just and reasonable" within the intendment of the Natural Gas Act. See also *New York Public Service Com.* v. *F. P. C.*, D.C.Cir., ... F.2d ....., decided December 8, 1960, 29 U.S. Law Week 2272. This is so because the only justification for giving the Commission the duty to regulate prices was the determination by Congress that the producers have a supply that is so restricted in relation to demand that they have the economic power to bargain for prices that will be injurious to the public.

"The purpose of the Natural Gas Act was to underwrite just and reasonable rates to the consumers of natural gas." *F. P. C.* v. *Hope Natural Gas Co.*, 320 U.S. 591.

We consider the foregoing comment appropriate at the outset of the discussion of this case, because we perceive that most of the Commission's approach to the certification procedures, until stopped by the Supreme Court in CATCO, was subject to the same criticism which the Commission itself was successfully leveling at the producers in the Section 4 proceedings: that the Commission was permitting the initial filing prices to be fixed by the producers merely on a showing, *so far as price justification was concerned,* that they had been bargained for at arm's length, or that they were not higher than a price someone else was . n paying in the area.

Thus, at the very threshold of the regulating procedure newly contracting producers were being permitted to charge prices for their gas that were in some instances 30% to 50% higher than earlier prices that were at the very time being suspended by the Commission pending hearings under Section 4 procedures. This inconsistency that concededly arose largely because of the sheer magnitude of the problem of processing the certification proceedings on any other basis, is what the Supreme Court brought in question and corrected in the CATCO decision.

This record discloses that United, the purchaser in this contract from Sun, had been purchasing gas in 1954 at from 9 cents to 12 cents per Mcf in the South Louisiana territory. The testimony of C. C. Barnett, Vice President of United in charge of the gas supply department, as to the move upward from that figure is significant:

"Q. Well, it just seems to me that it can be simply stated that the new high prices do tend to establish

new floors for prices. A. Well, I think that you are -- you are probably correct in that. I won't go all the way to it, but in about 1954 we were buying gas in South Louisiana at around nine to twelve cents, and Gulf Interstate was certificated and they were paying the enormous amount of 20 cents.

Q. That is the Erath Field, is it not? A. In the Erath Field. And of course they bought one big package. There was a trillion foot field and they wanted it. So they paid 20 cents for it then.

About six months or a year later, American Louisiana came in, and instead of paying 20 cents for a trillion foot field they paid 20 cents for smaller fields. And there can be no argument about it that that had brought the price up."

This discussion by the responsible parties who fixed this initial price makes it perfectly plain that a substantial part of the increase from "nine to twelve cents" to 21½ cents resulted from the tremendously increased demand as contrasted with the available supply. In stating that this is plain from the record before us, we, of course, do not say that a substantial part of the increase may not also be attributable to increased costs, nor do we decide that the nine to twelve cents price was a just and reasonable figure. We do know that virtually every increase resulting from escalator clauses or from the operation of "favored nations" provisions in existing contracts was being subjected, during this four year period, to Section 4 hearings for reasonableness.

Apart from any decision of the Supreme Court, it does not seem reasonable or consistent with any understandable policy of Congress that the Commission would, as an illustration, permit the filing of intial price of 20 or 20½ cents, resulting in the collection of that rate until

set aside by a Section 5 proceeding (found by the Supreme Court and conceded by all parties to be practically ineffectual because of the volume of business under Section 4) and, on the same day, suspend an automatic increase under an escalation clause from 9 to 15 cents.

In dealing with this problem, the Supreme Court said in *Atlantic Refining Co.* v. *Public Service Commission*, *supra*:

> "In view of this framework in which the Commission is authorized and directed to act, the initial certificating of a proposal under section 7(e) of the Act as being required by the public convenience and necessity becomes crucial. This is true because the delay incident to determination in section 5 proceedings through which initial certificated rates are reviewable appears nigh interminable. Although Phillips Petroleum Co. v. Wisconsin, 347 U.S. 672, was decided in 1954, cases instituted under section 5 are still in the investigative stage. This long delay without the protection of refund, as is possible in a section 4 proceeding, would provide a windfall for the natural gas company with a consequent squall for the consumers. This the Congress did not intend. Moreover, the fact that the Commission was not given the power to suspend initial rates under section 7 makes it the more important, as the Commission itself says, that 'this crucial sale should not be permanently certificated unless the rate level has been shown to be in the public interest,' 17 F.P.C. 563, 575.
>
> . . . . .
>
> "It is true that the Act does not require a determination of just and reasonable rates in a section 7 proceeding as it does in one under either section 4 of section 5. Nor do we hold that a 'just and reasonable' rate hearing is a prerequisite to the issuance of producer certificates. What we do say is that the

inordinate delay presently existing in the processing of section 5 proceedings requires a most careful scrutiny and responsible reaction to initial price proposals of producers under section 7. Their proposals must be supported by evidence showing their necessity to 'the present or future public convenience and necessity' before permanent certificates are issued. This is not to say that rates are the only factor bearing on the public convenience and necessity, for section 7(e) requires the Commission to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest. The fact that prices have leaped from one plateau to the higher levels of another, as is indicated here, does make price a consideration of prime importance. This is the more important during this formative period when the ground rules of producer regulation are being evolved. Where the application on its face or on presentation of evidence signals the existence of a situation that probably would not be in the public interest, a permanent certificate should not be issued.

"There is, of course, available in such a situation a method by which the applicant and the Commission can arrive at a rate that is in keeping with the public convenience and necessity. The Congress, in section 7(e), has authorized the Commission to condition certificates in such manner as the public convenience and necessity may require. Where the proposed price is not in keeping with the public interest because it is out of line or because its approval might result in a triggering of general price rises or an increase in the applicant's existing rates by reason of 'favored nations' clauses or otherwise, the Commission in the exercise of its discretion might attach such conditions as it believes necessary."

The parties here belabor the question: what is the "line" as envisaged by the Court in the language quoted above, "out of line" and "hold the line"? The principal question here is whether the line is established by proof of what

others are paying under certificates that were either uncontested or were being appealed and are thus "suspect," or what others are paying based on such "suspect" rates, or what even unregulated intrastate purchasers are paying. We agree with much that that is said in the Ninth Circuit opinion, supra, which is in turn adopted by the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia:

> "When an order certificating an initial rate is under court or Commission review, it is possible that the certificate may be eventually denied or price conditions may be attached. In our opinion an existing rate subject to such a hazard does not provide a reasonably reliable basis upon which to predicate a price line. In the event the existing rate is later modified or conditioned as a result of the pending proceedings the foundation of the line derived therefrom would be undermined. Moreover, the acceptance of questioned existing prices as a guide in setting the line might itself have the anomalous effect of creating a standard by which the questioned rates would then be judged.
>
> "For the reasons indicated we are of the opinion that it would be an abuse of discretion for the Commission in establishing a price line to rely upon producers prices which are under such a cloud.
>
> "We go further and express the view that where a substantial number of certificated prices are thus under court or Commission review, like prices in the same area though not currently under review ought to be regarded as suspect. In such circumstances it would seem that such similar prices ought not to be relied upon in fixing a line except upon evidence and findings to the effect that they are not subject to the same infirmities which are under test in the pending proceedings."

We think it too plain for argument that the first court tested and court approved certificated sale at a price much

higher than any theretofore certificated according to the standards found by the reviewing court to be consonant with CATCO will unquestionably breach "the line." Such, we think, would be the effect of our approval of the certificated price in this case.

We do not attempt to determine what the "line" is on this record. We have no doubt that in this case the price of 23½ cents per Mcf, including the tax reimbursement,[1] was out of line as the term was used by the Supreme Court. The only evidence on this record that supports such "out of line" price is the fact that it was negotiated at arm's length and was required by the intense competition. This, as we have said, is not enough. It was clearly incumbent on the proponent of such a rate to make some showing of the "reason why" (as it was expressed in the CATCO opinion) 21½ cents, excluding tax, is a proper initial rate in 1958 when the parties were freely contracting in 1954 at half that figure.

We are fully aware of the criticism that has been leveled at any regulatory scheme that keeps sums now approaching three quarters of a billion dollars subject to refund pending final determination of just and reasonable rates. However, we take notice of the fact that the log jam is now breaking, as witness the decision in the Phillips Petroleum Company case, F.P.C. Op. #338, and it may be hoped that appropriate formulas for resolving the other section 4 cases may soon be forthcoming. The Commission

[1] It was testified and the Commission found that the 2.3 cents tax reimbursement was an element of bargaining. Thus, while it may represent actual reimbursement for taxes paid, it is an element of cost to the purchaser, and in negotiating contracts purchasers do not always agree to reimburse the entire tax burden. The agreement here to pay 21½ cents plus full reimbursement for currently collected taxes, was found by the Commission to be a new high rate for United and for the area.

is at least making a strong bid to that end by the publication of its Area Price-Level schedules. See Statement of General Policy #61-1, issued September 28, 1960.

We conclude that the order here under attack must be set aside and the proceedings remanded for further appropriate action by the Commission.

It is so ORDERED.

BROWN, Circuit Judge: I dissent.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

October Term, 1960

No. 18113

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,

Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,

Respondent.

Petition for Review of an Order of the Federal Power Commission.

Before: TUTTLE, Chief Judge, and BROWN and WISDOM, Circuit Judges.

JUDGMENT

This cause came on to be heard on the petition of The United Gas Improvement Company for review of an order of the Federal Power Commission issued on August 10, 1959 in Docket Nos. G-16,380 and G-16,387, and was argued by counsel;

ON CONSIDERATION WHEREOF, It is now here ordered, adjudged and decreed by this Court that the order of the Commission in this cause be, and the same is hereby, vacated; and that this cause be, and it is hereby, remanded to the Commission for further appropriate action. "BROWN, Circuit Judge, Dissenting."

Issued: February 22, 1961

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

No. 18113

THE UNITED GAS IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
Petitioner,

v.

FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION,
Respondent.

Petition for Review of an Order of the Federal Power Commission.

(April 25, 1961)

ON PETITION FOR REHEARING

Before: TUTTLE, Chief Judge, and BROWN and WISDOM, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

It is ORDERED that the petition for hearing filed in the above styled and numbered cause be, and the same is, hereby, DENIED.

BROWN, Circuit Judge, Dissenting

PETITION FOR REHEARING — FILED — 4/7/61

PETITION FOR REHEARING — DENIED — 4/25/61

APPENDIX B

Order Issuing Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity and Modifying and Adopting Initial Decision of presiding Examiner

(Issued August 10, 1959)

On February 19, 1959, the presiding examiner issued an initial decision in the above-entitled proceedings by which he would grant a certificate of public convenience and necessity to The Superior Oil Company (Superior) authorizing it to render sales of natural gas to Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company (Transco). Superior would produce the gas from leases which are in the area offshore from Vermilion Parish in the State of Louisiana. The initial price for the proposed sale is 21.4 cents per Mcf, without tax reimbursement. The examiner would also authorize Transco to construct and operate facilities estimated to cost $2,135,000, to receive the gas purchased from Superior.[1]

Exceptions to the examiner's decision were filed only by United Gas Improvement Company (UGI), a distributing company customer of Transco, which sells gas in Philadelphia and vicinity. UGI requests that final action on the applications in this case be withheld until decision is reached by the Supreme Court in *Atlantic Refining Co.* v. *Public Service Commission of the State of New York* (the *Catco* case), and by the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *F.P.C.*, taking the

[1] Subsequent to the examiner's decision, on June 22, 1959, Superior filed with the Commission a motion requesting that final decision be reached in this case as expeditiously as reasonably possible, since unless construction of offshore underwater pipelines is commenced in the near future, inclement weather would probably prevent the accomplishment thereof until next summer, resulting in a delay in making this gas available to Transco and its customers and in the denial of income therefrom to Superior for a year.

position that here as there the facts do not support the initial price proposed, and that Superior's sales proposed herein should be treated in the same manner that the sales in the Court cases cited are required or permitted to be treated.

Decisions have now been handed down in the *Catco* case, 79 Sup. Ct. 1246 (June 22, 1959), and the *United Gas Improvement Company* case, Nos. 12797 and 12805 (CA 3, August 4, 1959), 269 F. 2d 865.

We conclude, as more fully appears below, that with certain modifications the presiding examiner's initial decision should be adopted and the exceptions thereto denied.

Our understanding of the requirements of the Supreme Court's *Catco* opinion we stated in our Opinion No. 325 and accompanying order issued August 7, 1959, in *Matters of South Georgia Natural Gas Company*, Docket Nos. G-9892, *et al.* See also our opinions in the *Texas Gas Transmission Corporation* case, G-17335, *et al.*, and the *Transwestern Pipeline Company* case, G-14871, *et al.* Summarizing briefly, under the *Catco* case the producer's proposed initial price must be supported by substantial evidence establishing that the price is required by the public convenience and necessity and is in the public interest; and that although the Commission should consider all the factors, price is an element of prime importance which the Commission should scrutinize closely with a view to protecting the consumer. The Court further indicated what evidence might or should appropriately be adduced to support the proposed price, and what circumstances justified the attachment of an initial price condition. Such evidence includes evidence of whether the proposed price is "out of line"; whether it would result in triggering of general price rises or an increase in the applicant's existing rates by reason of 'favored nation' clauses or otherwise;

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evidence of comparisons with the existing cost of gas to the purchaser; evidence of whether the proposed producer price would lead to an increase in the rates of the purchaser; evidence of a public need for the gas; and evidence respecting the other matters discussed by the Court in its opinion.

In addition, it appears from the Court's opinion that producer certificate proceedings need not necessarily assume the character of rate proceedings under section 4 or 5 of the Act, the Court stating at 79 Sup. Ct., p. 1255, that "Section 7 procedures in such situations [involving the attachment of price conditions] thus act to hold the line awaiting adjudication of a just and reasonable rate." Finally, it seems clear from the opinion that if a record sustaining the proposed initial price is not made, the certificate must be denied or conditioned, as the facts require, and that therefore it is the applicant which at least runs the risk of failing to substantiate the proposed price.

In applying the *Catco* opinion, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in the *United Gas Improvement Company* case cited above upheld our opinion certificating producer sales without price conditions, concluding that on the facts there before it, the Commission did not err in the balancing of the weight it accorded the various factors of public convenience and necessity.

Turning to the facts of this record, we conclude that the requirement laid down by the Supreme Court in its *Catco* opinion have been met in this case. In our opinion, the evidence in the record before us substantially establishes that the proposed initial price for Superior's sale is in the public interest, and the proposed sales required by the public convenience and necessity. To us, it is clear that there is no warrant or justification for the attachment of any initial price condition in this case.

Considering whether the price is "out of line" under *Catco*, the facts support the conclusion that Superior's proposed price is not out of line on a comparative basis. The price Transco is to pay for this gas is the same as that it is obligated to pay adjoining offshore operators. Also, the proposed price is less than Transco is now paying other suppliers for gas from onshore fields a short distance away in southern Louisiana.[2] In addition, the proposed price is less than other pipelines such as Trunkline Gas Company in an offshore purchase, and United Fuel Company and Southern Natural Gas Company in southern Louisiana, are paying.

As to the possibility of triggering referred to in *Catco*, this price will not trigger any favored-nation clause in Transco's south Louisiana contracts since it is not within the geographic area specified by such clauses; and it will not affect in any way Transco's existing contracts anywhere. Of course, this price will not result in other pipelines paying higher prices for gas when they are already paying either the same price or more.

As to the effect of this price on Transco's rates, as indicated in the examiner's decision, Transco has already acquired under Commission authorizations over two-thirds of the gas in the two offshore fields in issue here at the same initial price proposed herein. This price has already been found to be required by the public convenience and necessity, a conclusion found reasonable by the Court in the *United Gas Improvement* case. In our judgment the effects of such increase in Transco's rates as may result from the

[2] An earlier proposal made by Transco involving a lesser price was not accepted. Also, Transco was requested to insert in the contract a favored nation and price redetermination clause but refused.

authorization of the sale proposed herein is outweighed by the benefits of these sales.

Among those benefits is the gas supply which would be added to Transco's system, the extent of which is fully described in the examiner's decision. The bulk of Superior's reserves are located in the Block 76 field, and Superior owns approximately 30 percent of the dedicated reserves in that field. By its acquisition of the reserves in the Block 76 field, Transco has been able to acquire what in the opinion of the company is probably the largest single reserve ever contracted by Transco since it commenced operations. Testimony was that Transco was fortunate to get it, since Superior's reserve alone was large enough to attract other purchasers, one of which was offering a higher price.

Further in this connection, the record establishes that Transco needs the gas and that the public will benefit from the company's acquisition of this additional supply. This gas would be included as a part of Transco's overall supply, and will help meet the continuing demands on its system. The facts disclose that southern Louisiana is the only area in which Transco has been able to acquire substantial volumes of uncommitted reserves during the past two years. It has sought unsuccessfully to acquire additional reserves at an initial price of 17 cents, and is obliged, if it is to continue to meet the customer requirements it has undertaken to meet, to pay producers in southern Louisiana a price which will induce them to sell the gas.

The demands of Transco's customers and of the markets it serves also support the authorization of this sale. The gas reserves involved in this case will be used to assist Transco to meet its market obligations during the 1959-1960 winter heating season as well as the increased requirements of next winter. The public convenience and

necessity obviously will be served by making this gas available to help supply the allocations of natural gas which the Commission has already authorized Transco to serve. Looking at the matter from another point of view, Transco currently uses approximately one-half trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year. The Superior reserves will meet Transco's system supply for about six months, thereby assisting the company to maintain the inventory of its system gas supply in the face of heavy annual depletion and ever-increasing annual demands by Transco's customers.

Transco is mindful of the importance of continuing to secure supplies of gas, as this record shows. Transco's witness testified that whenever it was possible for his company to augment its general gas supply by such a large reserve in an area where it was already certificated and on terms substantially identical with the supply contracts of previous certifications, it was to the benefit of the company to do so. Our knowledge of Transco's system and the large and growing demands of its customers convinces us that this is so.[3]

In addition, the facts disclose that the gas sales contract between Superior and Transco was consummated only after arm's-length negotiation, and there is no affiliation or corporate control between the two, although this fact of itself is not sufficient to sustain the proposed price.

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[3] This opinion may be shared by others most directly affected by the proposal and in a position to judge where their interests lie, namely, Transco's customers. This case started out as an uncontested proceeding under the Commission's Regulations and PGI is the only customer company which excepted to the examiner's decision.

Staff counsel did not file a brief or exceptions to the examiner's decision.

We conclude that the producer sale proposed herein is substantially supported by the evidence of record and should be certificated at the price proposed, without the attachment of any price condition. The presiding examiner's initial decision should be modified to the extent inconsistent herewith, and as modified should be adopted by the commission.

The Commission further finds:

All material exceptions, arguments and objections not discussed herein have been considered but are without substantial support in the record or a reasonable basis in law and should be denied. Except to the extent granted herein, exceptions of UGI should be denied. The presiding examiner's initial decision issued herein on February 19, 1959, should, except to the extent modified by this order, be adopted by the Commission as of the date of issuance of this order, to constitute with this order its decision in these proceedings.

The commission orders:

(A) The initial decision of the presiding examiner issued herein on February 19, 1959, except to the extent modified by this order, is hereby adopted by the Commission as of the date of issuance of this order, to constitute with this order its decision in these proceedings.

(B) The exceptions filed by UGI to the aforesaid initial decision are, except to the extent granted by this order, hereby denied.

By the Commission.

J. H. GUTRIDE
Joseph H. Gutride,
Secretary.

Order Denying Rehearing

(Issued October 7, 1959)

Petitions for rehearing of the Commission's order issued August 10, 1959, in the above-entitled proceedings were filed on September 9, 1959, by The United Gas Improvement Company, and on September 18, 1959, by the Public Service Commission of the State of New York.[1] By that order we issued a certificate of public convenience and necessity authorizing a producer sale to Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation at the price proposed. Contending that this action was contrary to law and unsupported by fact, the petitioners request that we grant rehearing and issue to the producer a certificate with a price condition; alternatively, it is contended, we can only deny the certificate applications.

The lack of merit to the arguments made by petitioners is sufficiently evident from the discussion contained in the order of which rehearing is sought. There is only one matter which we desire to discuss briefly here. The United Gas Improvement Company contends that we erred in not considering the proposed producer price in the light of the "just and reasonable" standards of the Natural Gas Act, contending that the *Catco* case[2] imposes such a requirement by its language in 360 U.S. at p. 388, which states that "As the original Section 7(c) provided, it was 'the intention of Congress that natural gas shall be sold in

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[1] We are considering the New York Commission's petition on the merits since, although delayed in the mail because misaddressed, it was mailed in New York on September 4, in sufficient time to have reached the Federal Power Commission before the last day for filing.

[2] *Atlantic Refining Company* v. *Public Service Commission of the State of New York*, 360 U.S. 378 (June 22, 1959).

interstate commerce for resale for ultimate public consumption for domestic, commercial, industrial, or any other use at the lowest possible reasonable rate consistent with the maintenance of adequate service in the public interest."

However, in our view this language does not require that every producer certificate proceeding must necessarily assume the character of rate proceedings under Sections 4 or 5 of the Act, as we pointed out in our order. We recognize that cost evidence may be called for in a given producer certificate proceeding, depending on the facts of the particular case;[3] but this does not mean that cost evidence is indispensible in every such case and in our judgment it is not indispensible in the instant case. We did consider the element of price in relation to the public demand and need for this gas and the maintenance of adequate service, as our order on its face discloses; and find that although we cannot determine the "just and reasonable" rate for this sale under the rate provisions of the Act, the certification of the price proposed is justified to assure the maintenance of adequate service in the public interest. We think, as the Court held in *United Gas Improvement Co.* v. *F.P.C.*, Nos. 12798 and 12805 (CA 3, August 4, 1959), 269 F. 2d 865, with respect to proposed producer prices somewhat comparable to those involved herein, that the balancing of the weight properly to be accorded the various factors of public convenience and necessity requires certificating the producer sale proposed herein without any price condition.

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[3] The Supreme Court said at 360 U.S. 392-393, that "As the proposed contract price was higher than any paid by Tennessee, including offshore production in the West Delta area of Louisiana, it is surprising that evidence, if available, was not introduced as to the relative costs of production in the two submerged areas."

The Commission further finds:

The assignments of error and grounds for rehearing contained in the petitions for rehearing filed in these proceedings set forth no new facts or legal considerations which were not fully considered by the Commission when it issued its above-described order of August 10, 1959, or which having now been considered warrant any change or modification of said order.

The Commission orders:

The petitions for rehearing of the Commission's order issued herein on August 10, 1959, filed by The United Gas Improvement Company on September 9, 1959, and by the Public Service Commission of the State of New York on September 18, 1959, are hereby denied.

By the Commission.

J. H. Gutride
Joseph H. Gutride,
Secretary.

APPENDIX C

The pertinent provisions of the Natural Gas Act of June 21, 1938, c. 556, 52 Stat. 821; as amended by Act of February 7, 1942, c. 49, 56 Stat. 83; 15 U.S.C. 717-717w, are as follows:

Sec 7. (c) No natural-gas company or person which will be a natural-gas company upon completion of any proposed construction or extension shall engage in the transportation or sale of natural gas, subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, or undertake the construction or extension of any facilities therefor, or acquire or operate any such facilities or extensions thereof, unless there is in force with respect to such natural-gas company a certificate of public convenience and necessity issued by the Commission authorizing such acts or operations: *Provided, however,* That if any such natural-gas company or predecessor in interest was bonafide engaged in transportation or sale of natural gas, subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, on the effective date of this amendatory Act, over the route or routes or within the area for which application is made and has so operated since that time, the Commission shall issue such certificate without requiring further proof that public convenience and necessity will be served by such operation, and without further proceedings, if application for such certificate is made to the Commission within ninety days after the effective date of this amendatory Act. Pending the determination of any such application, the continuance of such operation shall be lawful.

In all other cases the Commission shall set the matter for hearing and shall give such reasonable notice of the hearing thereon to all interested persons as in its judgment may be necessary under rules and regulations to be

prescribed by the Commission; and the application shall be decided in accordance with the procedure provided in subsection (e) of this section and such certificate shall be issued or denied accordingly: *Provided, however,* That the Commission may issue a temporary certificate in cases of emergency, to assure maintenance of adequate service or to serve particular customers, without notice or hearing, pending the determination of an application for a certificate, and may by regulation exempt from the requirements of this section temporary acts or operations for which the issuance of a certificate will not be required in the public interest. [52 Stat. 825 (1938, as amended, 56 Stat. 83 (1942); 15 U.S.C. § 717f (c)]

(e) Except in the cases governed by the provisos contained in subsection (c) of this section, a certificate shall be issued to any qualified applicant therefor, authorizing the whole or any part of the operation, sale, service, construction, extension, or acquisition covered by the application, if it is found that the applicant is able and willing properly to do the acts and to perform the service proposed and to conform to the provisions of the Act and the requirements, rules, and regulations of the Commission thereunder, and that the proposed service, sale, operation, construction, extension, or acquisition, to the extent authorized by the certificate, is or will be required by the present or future public convenience and necessity; otherwise, such application shall be denied. The Commission shall have the power to attach to the issuance of the certificate and to the exercise of the rights granted thereunder such reasonable terms and conditions as the public convenience and necessity may require. [56 Stat. 84 (1942); 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e)]

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Sec. 19. (a) Any person, State, municipality, or State commission aggrieved by an order issued by the Commission in a proceeding under this act to which such person, State, municipality, or State commission is a party may apply for a rehearing within thirty days after the issuance of such order. The application for rehearing shall set forth specifically the ground or grounds upon which such application is based. Upon such application the Commission shall have power to grant or deny rehearing or to abrogate or modify its order without further hearing. Unless the Commission acts upon the application for rehearing within thirty days after it is filed, such application may be deemed to have been denied. No proceeding to review any order of the Commission shall be brought by any person unless such person shall have made application to the Commission for a rehearing thereon.

(b) Any party to a proceeding under this act aggrieved by an order issued by the Commission in such proceeding may obtain a review of such order in the circuit court of appeals of the United States for any circuit wherein the natural-gas company to which the order relates is located or has its principal place of business, or in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, by filing in such court, within sixty days after the order of the Commission upon the application for rehearing, a written petition praying that the order of the Commission be modified or set aside in whole or in part. A copy of such petition shall forthwith be served upon any member of the Commission and thereupon the Commission shall certify and file with the court a transcript of the record upon which the order complained of was entered. Upon the filing of such transcript such court shall have exclusive jurisdiction to affirm, modify, or set aside such order in whole or in part. No objection to the order of the Com-

mission shall be considered by the court unless such objection shall have been urged before the Commission in the application for rehearing unless there is reasonable ground for failure so to do. The finding of the Commission as to the facts, if supported by substantial evidence, shall be conclusive. If any party shall apply to the court for leave to adduce additional evidence, and shall show to the satisfaction of the court that such additional evidence is material and that there were reasonable grounds for failure to adduce such evidence in the proceedings before the Commission, the court may order such additional evidence to be taken before the Commission and to be adduced upon the hearing in such manner and upon such terms and conditions as to the court may seem proper. The Commission may modify its findings as to the facts by reason of the additional evidence so taken, and it shall file with the court such modified or new findings, which if supported by substantial evidence, shall be conclusive, and its recommendation, if any, for the modification or setting aside of the original order. The judgment and decree of the court, affirming, modifying, or setting aside, in whole or in part, any such order of the Commission, shall be final, subject to review by the Supreme Court of the United States upon certiorari or certification as provided in sections 239 and 240 of the Judicial Code, as amended (U.S.C., title 28, secs. 346 and 347).

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